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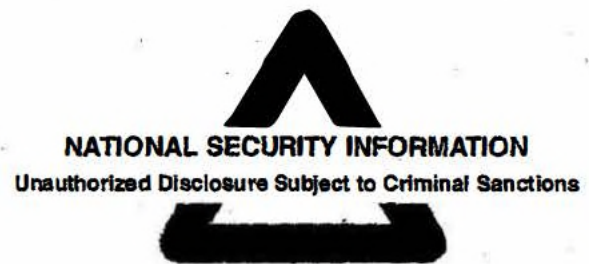
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Intelligence Report

DCI Counterterrorist Center

02 November 2000

Bin Ladin's Terrorist Operations: Meticulous and Adaptable

Credible intelligence reporting on the activities of Usama Bin Ladin's al-Qa'ida organization depicts a highly skilled, resilient network with a wide range of methods of attack at its disposal. Al-Qa'ida operatives are trained to conduct bombings, assassinations, standoff attacks, kidnappings, and attacks with crude chemical or biological agents, and the group's extreme interpretation of Islam sanctions the use of these methods against a large pool of US and other targets, including civilians.

- The organization also observes sound operational practices, making use of meticulous contingency planning completed far in advance of an operation.*

Intelligence on terrorist plotting discovered over the millennial period also indicates that al-Qa'ida has refined its tactics to cope with security crackdowns and heightened political pressure on Bin Ladin and his Taliban hosts. The organization is improving its operational security, seeking plausible deniability by involving other extremists in its attacks, and simplifying its planning by shifting to softer targets and allowing local cells to act more autonomously.

- These adaptations make al-Qa'ida's operations less vulnerable to discovery and more difficult to attribute to Bin Ladin, while preserving the group's ability to inflict high casualties in its attacks.*

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Operational Doctrine Rooted in Interpretation of Islamic Law [REDACTED]

Bin Ladin's terrorist operations are grounded in his extreme interpretation of Islamic law, which sanctions attacks against a wide variety of targets worldwide. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], Islamic scholars in al-Qa'ida's leadership must issue a doctrinal justification in a *fatwa*, or formal religious ruling, as a prerequisite for all attacks. In practice, this requirement places few constraints on the group's terrorist planning. Al-Qa'ida's most recent *fatwa*—issued in February 1998 by Bin Ladin and leaders of other extremist groups under the banner of his "World Islamic Front for Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders"—is broadly worded, stating that all Muslims have a religious duty "to kill Americans and their allies, both civilian and military" worldwide.¹ During an interview in December 1998 Bin Ladin explained that all US citizens are legitimate targets because they pay taxes to the US Government.

- This interpretation broadened and superseded Bin Ladin's previous *fatwa*, which only authorized attacks against Western military targets on the Arabian Peninsula. Bin Ladin publicized this decree as a "Declaration of Jihad" in August 1996, [REDACTED] the organization had secretly operated under its terms since 1992. Because the statement authorized operations in a limited area, al-Qa'ida attacks in other regions of the world initially required separate *fatwas*. [REDACTED]

US interests are Bin Ladin's primary—but not sole—target. The United States figures most prominently in Bin Ladin's public threats, and [REDACTED], Bin Ladin has characterized the United States as "the head of the snake." Bin Ladin's *fatwa* authorizes attacks against Americans "and their allies," suggesting that he sees the countries of the "Jewish-Crusader alliance" (see box) as a single enemy. In particular, Bin Ladin appears to see Israel, France, and the United Kingdom as additional priorities for attack.

This Intelligence Report was prepared by an analyst in the DCI Counterterrorist Center. It has been coordinated within CIA. Queries and comments are welcome and may be directed to the [REDACTED]

¹ Bin Ladin's *fatwas* carry no formal authority outside of his own organization, and many Islamic religious scholars view his justifications for terrorism as simplistic and flawed, failing to address the numerous Islamic injunctions prohibiting violence against innocents—including Christians and Jews, who are traditionally tolerated as "Peoples of the Book." Instead, Bin Ladin attempts to appeal to Muslims who are not familiar with the finer points of Islamic jurisprudence but are convinced that their civilization must fend off an assault of Western military power and cultural values. (U)

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- Al-Qa'ida members planning terrorist operations in Jordan in December 1999 intended to attack both US and Israeli tourists, and Bin Ladin frequently denounces Israel and the United Kingdom alongside the United States in his public statements. [REDACTED] al-Qa'ida issued a *fatwa* authorizing attacks against French interests in 1992 in response to French policies in Algeria. [REDACTED] that in 1994 Bin Ladin's organization prepared targeting studies of numerous Israeli and French facilities in Nairobi and Djibouti.
- Bin Ladin's doctrine tolerates the death of citizens of other countries in his attack, as "collateral damage" or as targets in their own right. In an interview in December 1998, Bin Ladin claimed that the obligation to attack US targets outweighs the risk to innocent civilians, whom he compared to human shields. [REDACTED]

Despite such justifications, Bin Ladin and his followers have sought to minimize deaths of individuals they consider "good Muslims" and to ensure that Westerners bear the brunt of their attacks.

- Al-Qa'ida cell members conducted the East Africa bombings on a Friday, when fewer observant Muslims would be on the streets.
- Al-Qa'ida-directed extremists planning attacks in Jordan in late 1999 chose to target Christian religious sites and other areas frequented by US and Israeli tourists. The group's choice of millennial celebrations corresponding to the Christian calendar for its first attack probably also reflected an intent to limit Muslim casualties. [REDACTED]

Bin Ladin's World View: Battling the "Jewish-Crusader" Conspiracy (U)

Like many figures in the larger Sunni extremist "jihad movement," Bin Ladin views the Islamic world as a civilization under siege by a conspiracy of foreign powers and corrupt Islamic regimes that he calls the "Jewish-Crusader alliance." An ideological tract [REDACTED] portrays this conspiracy as a vast international front led by the United States and Israel and encompassing other NATO members, apostate Arab governments, such as Egypt, Algeria, Jordan, and Syria, and other states involved in territorial disputes with the Islamic world, such as Russia, India, and Ethiopia. The goal of this alliance is the destruction of Islam by territorial conquest and the introduction of corrupting foreign influences.

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- Bin Ladin and other jihadists often cite military action against Iraq, sanctions against the Taliban, US support for Israel, and the killing of Muslims in Chechnya and Kosovo as recent examples of international designs against Islam.

Bin Ladin has endorsed a variety of actions to defend the Islamic world against this conspiracy.

- **Terrorist and insurgent attacks.** Some Sunni extremist authors have even attempted to take ownership of the word "terrorism," noting that the Qur'an tells Muslims, "to strike terror into the hearts of the enemies of God" (8:60). [REDACTED] that Bin Ladin sees the United States, Israel, and other major Western powers as his organization's top targets, but he also provides assistance to extremists that target the interests of other perceived enemy states.
- **Acquisition of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons.** Bin Ladin has called the acquisition of unconventional weapons a "religious duty" and noted that they could represent a strategic counterweight to the military strength of the United States and other foreign powers.
- **Promoting Islamic unity.** Bin Ladin has called for the restoration of a pan-Islamic Caliphate based in Afghanistan to serve as a rallying point for the Islamic world. [REDACTED] Bin Ladin also attempted in the mid-1990s to create a united Sunni-Shia front opposed to the West.

Thorough Pre-Operational Planning [REDACTED]

By the time of the 1998 East Africa bombings, al-Qa'ida had established a modus operandi emphasizing careful planning and exhaustive field preparations, which Bin Ladin saw as a prerequisite for spectacular terrorist operations. When asked in a November 1996 interview why his organization had not yet conducted attacks in response to its August *fatwa*, Bin Ladin replied, "If we wanted to carry out small operations, it would have been easy to do so after the statements, but the nature of the battle requires qualitative operations that affect the adversary, which obviously requires good preparation."

Much of the advance planning involves the preparation of targeting studies. [REDACTED] al-Qa'ida operatives receive instruction in vehicular and foot surveillance and prepare detailed written reports for the group's archives on the layout and vulnerabilities of potential targets. Casing reports

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are based on repeated surveillance efforts, enabling the operatives to gauge a facility's level of activity and security awareness at different times of the day. Operatives also are trained in various methods for obtaining access to the interior of a facility.

- [REDACTED] several US facilities in Nairobi, as well as Israeli and French installations there and in Djibouti. The study of the US Embassy in Nairobi—prepared in December 1993—included detailed information on the building's physical structure, security posture, and business hours, as well as the layout of the reception area inside the Embassy. The report noted that the casing was conducted by two operatives with a camera and included recommendations for possible methods of attack. According to press, local operatives also surveilled the Embassy days before the August bombing, probably to update the 1993 casing report.
- [REDACTED] operatives gained entry to the interior of the facilities by posing as tourists or businessmen or under the pretext of asking for directions, techniques that are taught in al-Qa'ida intelligence courses.

Such detailed field preparation may support the process of review and approval of an operation by al-Qa'ida's leadership. As of 1996, Bin Ladin and his lieutenants carefully scrutinized attack plans for religious justification and chose specific targets and operatives to mount the attacks, [REDACTED] the group's pre-operational planning in 1998 and 1999 also showed extensive interaction between headquarters and the field.

[REDACTED]
Africa bombings,

[REDACTED] during the months prior to the East

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authorities [REDACTED] arrested a group of al-Qa'ida members attempting to smuggle [REDACTED] antitank guided missiles into the kingdom for use against US or Saudi facilities. [REDACTED]

- **Assassinations and armed assaults.** [REDACTED], al-Qa'ida maintained a specialized 40-man assassination squad in the mid-1990s, and [REDACTED] its operatives receive training in assassination techniques, including methods for attacking well-protected dignitaries. Bin Ladin's followers also see the killing of individual Americans as an acceptable alternative when fixed installations prove too well-protected. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- **Kidnappings.** Al-Qa'ida's ability to execute kidnappings is unproven, but the group trains its operatives in kidnapping techniques and views hostage taking as a legitimate tactic under certain conditions. [REDACTED] al-Qa'ida operatives are authorized to kidnap hostages for interrogation or recruitment purposes, for use as bargaining chips, to attract media attention, or as revenge for the targets' actions against the organization. [REDACTED] a course taught to al-Qa'ida operatives in 1997 included a "graduation exercise" simulating the kidnapping of the US Secretary of Defense. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

- **Chemical and biological attacks.** Reporting from a variety of sources reveals that Bin Ladin's organization is interested in acquiring unconventional weapons—particularly chemical or biological agents—and possesses at least a rudimentary capability to employ them in attacks. In a December 1998 interview, Bin Ladin called the acquisition of these weapons a "religious duty" and noted, "How we would use them is up to us." [REDACTED] Abu Khabbab's camp at Derunta offers training in the use of chemical poisons and biological toxins, mostly fabricated from widely available materials. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]**Adapting to New Political and Operational Realities** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] al-Qa'ida has adapted aspects of its modus operandi to meet the challenges of a more adverse political and security environment since the East Africa bombings. Al-Qa'ida is the target of a worldwide law enforcement and intelligence crackdown, and international pressure has led the Taliban to insist that Bin Ladin act with greater discretion. [REDACTED]

Shifting to softer targets. Since 1998, Bin Ladin has steadily expanded his pool of potential targets to preserve al-Qa'ida's ability to inflict high casualties in the face of increased security around many US facilities. Improved force protection measures at US military facilities in Saudi Arabia after the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing probably contributed to Bin Ladin's 1998 *fatwa*, which broadened al-Qa'ida's targeting to include US civilians worldwide and provided the justification for attacks against the US Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam.

- The Jordan plotters' decision to target large crowds of tourists may reflect a shift to even softer targets in response to heightened US attention to the physical security of embassies.
 - [REDACTED]
 - US military and diplomatic facilities will remain high-priority targets for al-Qa'ida, however, especially if the organization can identify vulnerabilities that it can exploit in an attack. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Reduced headquarters role. Information on the preparations for anti-US operations in Jordan suggests that al-Qa'ida is allowing some local cells more freedom to choose targets, timing, and methods of attack. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In contrast, the East Africa bombings involved both local cell members and operatives dispatched from Afghanistan and other parts of the network.

- Such decentralization in decisionmaking authority allows al-Qa'ida to minimize contact between headquarters and the field, making preparations for an operation less time-consuming, less vulnerable to premature discovery, and more difficult to attribute to Bin Ladin. [REDACTED]

Reaching out to other extremists. Since the East Africa bombings, Bin Ladin has taken limited steps to dissociate himself publicly from terrorist activity, probably to shield his Taliban hosts from further international pressure. In two interviews in December 1998, Bin Ladin portrayed himself merely as an "instigator" who provides the ideological justification for terrorist attacks but has no role in ordering or carrying them out. To bolster this claim, Bin Ladin has since attempted to involve Sunni extremists from outside al-Qa'ida in his terrorist operations, with mixed success.

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- [REDACTED]
- The plots in Canada and Jordan attest to Bin Ladin's success in enlisting the aid of more loosely organized Sunni extremist networks. Most of the individuals involved in these plots lacked formal membership in major terrorist organizations but were receptive to Bin Ladin's anti-US message and had dealings with his organization through their involvement in the jihads in Afghanistan, Chechnya, or Bosnia [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Al-Qa'ida's far-flung network, careful attention to detail, emphasis on secrecy, and use of operatives with widely varying levels of experience can slow down an operation or result in its discovery.

- *Sensitive to targets' security posture.* Al-Qa'ida may delay attacks if security measures at their targets change visibly. Local cell members often surveil their targets frequently until days before an attack, and changes in a site's security posture could force the cell to revise its plans or to suspect that they have been compromised and seek new guidance from al-Qa'ida's leadership before proceeding. Noticeable increases in security also could lead a cell to postpone an operation until conditions are more favorable.
 - *Risks of compartmentation.* Al-Qa'ida's emphasis on compartmentation during terrorist planning serves to protect an operation from discovery, but it also makes a cell dependent on a few key individuals for guidance. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
 - *Inexperienced operatives.* Bin Ladin's tendency to use inexperienced personnel to perform less sophisticated roles in an operation—such as suicide bombers or couriers—has led to mistakes that exposed previous terrorist plots. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

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Appendix A: The East Africa Bombings (U)

The near-simultaneous bombings of the US Embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam on 7 August 1998 concluded almost a full year of preparations involving operatives throughout al-Qa'ida and the resources of a potent local network in place for almost a decade. The attacks inflicted a heavy toll—over 200 dead and thousands injured—and demonstrated that Bin Ladin is willing to sacrifice a well-developed local infrastructure to strike at the United States. [REDACTED]

Early Activities of the East Africa Cell: A Foundation for Terror

[REDACTED] "East Africa Cell"—grew into a significant infrastructure [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The cell operated through a network of cover organizations, including Islamic NGOs, such as Help Africa People and Mercy International Relief Agency, and small fishing, clothing, and gemstone businesses. It also maintained contact with senior al-Qa'ida leaders and performed important tasks for the organization.

- [REDACTED] Bin Ladin's direction, local cell members provided weapons and training in guerrilla warfare to members of the Somali extremist group al-Ittihad al-Islami.
- Abu 'Ubaydah al-Panjshiri—Bin Ladin's deputy and former military chief, [REDACTED]—had extensive family connections in Kenya and Tanzania and was in frequent contact with the cell until his death in a May 1996 ferryboat accident on Lake Victoria, according to press. [REDACTED]

The cell used its presence in Kenya to case potential targets and acquire explosives for terrorist attacks. [REDACTED] al-Qa'ida operatives in Nairobi surveilled and prepared detailed reports on [REDACTED] US, French, and Israeli targets and a hotel frequented by Western tourists, [REDACTED]

- The US Embassy was the first target surveilled, and other US targets included the US International University in Nairobi and local offices of the US Information Service, Department of Agriculture, Agency for International Development, and Library of Congress.

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- The cell had obtained explosives, possibly through local arms trafficking networks, years before the bombings. The US indictment of several of the bombing suspects charges that a local cell member in 1996 displayed TNT and detonators acquired in Tanzania. [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

- Bin Ladin warned in a late May interview that the results of his jihad "would be visible within weeks."
- Between May and July, al-Qa'ida operatives in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam rented safehouses and purchased the trucks that they later used as bomb vehicles, according to press.
- According to press [REDACTED], Nairobi cell members completed the last preparations for the attack during the first week of August, including a final casing of the Embassy, [REDACTED], and the departure from East Africa of all al-Qa'ida operatives not directly involved in the attacks. [REDACTED]

An Eclectic Terrorist Team

Press [REDACTED] reporting indicate that the network that conducted the bombings comprised personnel from a diverse mix of nationalities and backgrounds, including longtime local cell members, seasoned terrorist planners from other parts of al-Qa'ida's network, and low-level fighters with little operational experience.

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- The network included at least three experienced Egyptian terrorists, including [REDACTED] Dar es Salaam cell leader Mustafa Fadl, and bombmaker "Abd al-Rahman," [REDACTED]
- The network employed three suicide operatives to deliver the bomb vehicles to their targets. Egyptian national Hamdan Khalafallah 'Awad, a.k.a. "Ahmad the German," drove the bomb-laden vehicle in Dar es Salaam, and two Saudis—Rashid Da'ud 'Uhali and Jihad Muhammad 'Ali, a.k.a. 'Azzam—accompanied the truck to the Embassy in Nairobi. 'Uhali arrived in Kenya from Afghanistan, where he had been fighting alongside the Taliban in an al-Qa'ida mujahidin unit, about a week before the bombings. The least experienced of the three, 'Uhali was to force security guards at gunpoint to open the Embassy gate, but he accidentally left his handgun in the bomb truck and fled the scene. Kenyan authorities later arrested him in a local hospital, where he was undergoing treatment for injuries sustained in the blast.
- Cell members who had resided in the area for years, including ethnic Arabs and Africans, handled most of the logistical preparations, including the acquisition of vehicles and safehouses. Two local cell members—Fazul 'Abdallah Muhammad, a.k.a. "Harun," a Nairobi-based Comoran, and Tanzanian national Khalfan Khamis Muhammad in Dar es Salaam—remained behind to accompany the suicide bombers to their targets after the rest of the cell had fled the region, according to press. [REDACTED]

Operations "Holy Ka'aba" and "al-Aqsa Mosque"

The day after the bombings, a London-based Arabic newspaper received three faxes claiming responsibility for the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam attacks—codenamed "Operation Holy Ka'aba" and "Operation al-Aqsa Mosque," respectively—on behalf of the "Islamic Army for the Liberation of the Holy Places," a previously unknown group. Quoting from Bin Ladin's February *fatwa*, these letters claimed that three suicide bombers conducted the bombings in retaliation for the presence of US troops on the Arabian Peninsula and US support to Israel.

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Appendix B: Bin Ladin's Role in the Anti-US "Millennial" Plots

In December 1999, intelligence and law enforcement agencies in Jordan and Canada uncovered separate networks preparing to conduct near-term, anti-US attacks. The networks consisted primarily of locally-based extremists who lacked formal affiliations with other terrorist groups.

The plotters in Jordan planned to time their first attacks to coincide with millennial New Year's celebrations, but the precise timing and current status of the two networks' other operations remain uncertain.

1990s. All but two members of the local network—an Algerian and an Iraqi—were Palestinians with Jordanian citizenship. Interrogations of those arrested revealed that the cell was planning to kill US and Israeli citizens with bombs and automatic weapons at a variety of tourist-related sites, including the SAS Radisson Hotel in Amman.

remarked that the cell's motto was, "The season is coming, and bodies will pile up in sacks."

al-Hijazi, began planning the operation.

sent casing studies for approval to Abu Zubaydah, a senior Bin Ladin lieutenant.

- The cell accumulated a large arms cache, including several tons of chemicals used to make explosives.

The detainees stated they intended to obtain additional explosives and weapons from Bin Ladin-affiliated cells in Syria and Lebanon.

al-Hijazi accompanied three operatives to Afghanistan for six months of terrorist training at al-Qa'ida camps.

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Hizballah-run camps in Lebanon and obtained funding from Abu Qatada, a London-based Palestinian activist who has long served as a spiritual leader to Sunni extremists in Jordan. We have no indication that Hizballah or Abu Qatada were aware of the cell's plans. [REDACTED]

The arrests in December thwarted the cell's millennial attacks, but other aspects of the operation may remain viable. Al-Hijazi and his three trainees were in Afghanistan at the time of the arrests, and some of them remain at large. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] other elements of the network may have their own targets in Jordan.

- EIJ members in Sudan claimed in early March that they still had plans to attack Israeli tourists at several sites in Jordan, [REDACTED]

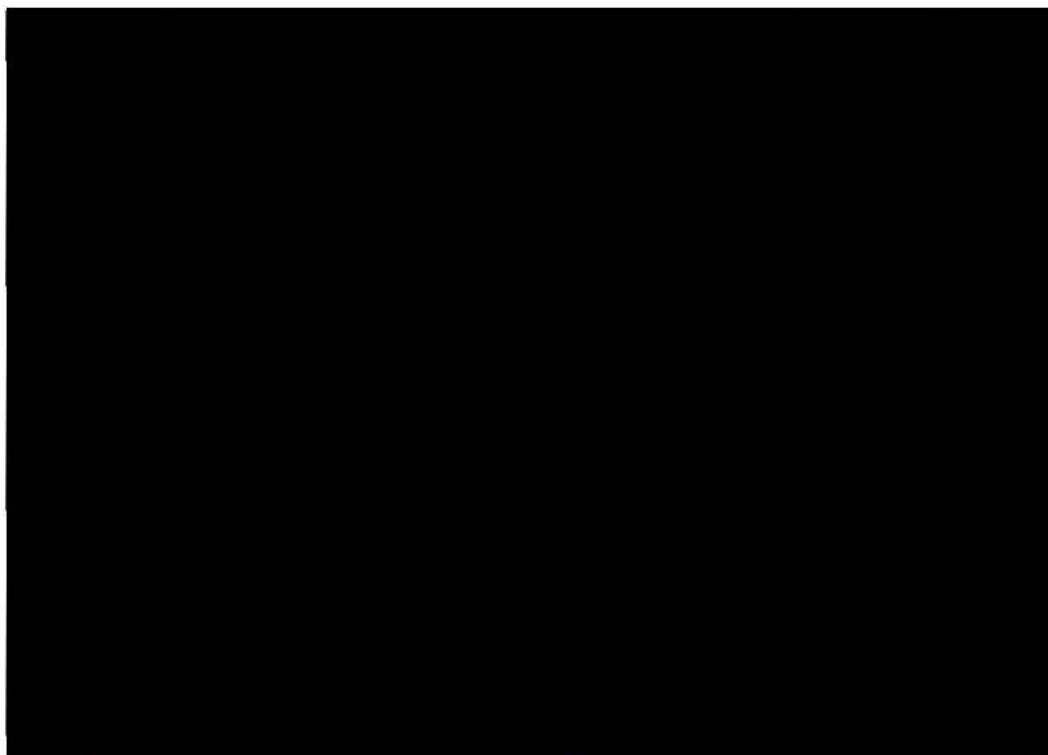
- [REDACTED]

Canada

The 14 December arrest of Algerian extremist Ahmad Ressam at the US-Canadian border uncovered preparations for additional anti-US attacks. Ressam—a former Montreal resident who had trained at Bin Ladin's camps in Afghanistan, [REDACTED]—was attempting to smuggle over 100 pounds of explosives and timing devices into the United States. [REDACTED]

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The Canada network's activities confirmed Bin Ladin's intent to conduct terrorist attacks inside the United States, but the timing, precise targets, and current status of the operations remain unclear. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]